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Source: *Folklore*, 1984, Vol. 95, No. 1 (1984), pp. 105-112

Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Folklore Enterprises, Ltd.

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The Attitude to War in 'The Epic of Sasoun'

EDWARD GULBEKIAN

OF THE epic poems and legends recited by the minstrels of ancient Armenia, only tantalising fragments have reached us. We know from classical Armenian literature that these were varied in content: cosmogonical (e.g. the origin of the Milky Way), mythological (the birth of Vahagn), heroic (the Hayk-Bél narrative), historical (the legends of Prince Aram, Ara the Handsome, King Artashés and King Tigran), and genealogical (the origin of the Mamikonyans). The county of Goght'n was particularly renowned for its minstrels.¹ Sadly, only one epic has survived largely intact until modern times, that centred on Sasoun in southern Armenia and known as *Sasna dsr'er*,² *Sasountsi Davit*,³ or *Qadjants toun*,⁴ first written down and published in 1874 by Garegin Srvandztyants.⁵ It deals principally with two periods of Armenian history: the pre-Christian era, and the ninth to tenth centuries A.D.⁶ Summarizing important concepts, it has served to inspire many generations. During the Second World War, for instance, a tank column raised by public subscription was named *Sasountsi Davit*.⁷

Several translations,⁸ with the exception of Shalian's,⁹ have failed to capture the noble epic mood of the original Armenian, reading more like fairy tales. The difficulties begin with the generic title *Sasna dsr'er*, i.e. 'the *dsour*'s of Sasoun.' Translations such as 'fools,' 'daredevils' or 'madmen' are quite misleading. Literally, the word *dsour* means 'bent' or 'abnormal,' as the antithesis of 'straight' or 'normal.' In the epic it signifies 'exceptional'—in stature, physical strength and mode of thought. A more correct rendering would be 'the exceptional people of Sasoun,' idiomatically we would call them 'the giants of Sasoun.' The latter is supported by the designation *Qadjants toun*, 'House/Dynasty of Brave Men,'¹⁰ which suggests a connection with the giants called *qadj* who, in popular imagination, lived around Mount Masis/Ararat.

The epic is strongly imbued with the concepts of fair play and independence. In the latter respect it is closely allied with the Hayk-Bél narrative, which described the origin of the Armenian nation,¹¹ and the epic of Prince Aram,¹² which epitomized its consolidation. To personify the popular struggle towards its ideals, the epic calls into existence a semi-divine family whose members are praiseworthy but not faultless. The presence of many epic elements, such as the motif of single combat between father and son, suggests that it may originally have been a professional composition, although in its present form it is certainly the product of the Armenian peasantry.¹³ As a consequence it reflects the beliefs and morals of the villages of Armenia. Bowra characterizes it as 'the work of men who had little first-hand knowledge of heroic life . . . the action, though full of charm and gaiety, lacks pride and style.'¹⁴ Hence it differs from the works of the royal and *nakhararakan* bards utilized by the fifth-century authors P'austos Bouzand¹⁵ and Movsés Khorenatsi.¹⁶

The present study examines certain unusual ideas on the conduct of war to be found in *The Epic of Sasoun*, in particular those concerning the political objectives of war, fairness in battle, and the distinction drawn between foreign rulers and the people under their leadership.

The 'giants' of Sasoun did not make war of their own volition. When they were forced to do battle, they had only one objective: it was to defend their people, their country and their independence.¹⁷ In defeat, the heroes of Sasoun become complacent, having no illusions about their fate, but in victory they make only minimal demands from their opponents, usually to return to their own country and refrain from attacking Sasoun.

The underlying principle to this course of action is that nations have their own frontiers, which should not be violated. It corresponds with the policy attributed to the first rulers in Western Asia by Trogus Pompeius: 'It was their custom to defend rather than advance the boundaries of their empire. The dominions of each were confined within his own country.'¹⁸ The same concept underlies *The Epic of Prince Aram*.

After killing Msra Meliq, the King of Egypt, Davit' summoned the enemy troops and declared:

I give you all permission,
Whencesoever you have come,
Return to your own place.
Get up, go and live in your own homes,
Live there in peace;
Say prayers for me, and
Bless my father and my mother.

He then released them with the admonition that they should not return to Sasoun:

Arise no more to come against Sasoun!
If again you take up arms against us,
Should you return once more to attack us,
Hidden even in a pit forty cubits deep
Or under the main grinding-stone of a mill,
There will rise against you Sasoun's Davit',
Arise against you the lightning sword:¹⁹

In general, Davit' retains no prisoners or booty, except in one version where he confiscates the enemy's equipment.²⁰ In others, after killing Msra Meliq, he takes his place as King of Egypt, but this he does by right of descent (as the meliq's half-brother), not by right of conquest.²¹ The belief that captives should not be retained echoes the ancient *Epic of King Artashés*, in which the Alan princess Sat'enik upbraids the Armenian king for keeping her brother prisoner:

For it is not the law that heroes, out of spite,
Should terminate the life of heroic cousins,
Or hold them in servitude in the ranks of slaves.²²

Prisoners of war should, in any case, not be killed. On one occasion Davit' admonished his uncle Ohan: 'We do not kill captives.'²³ This is emphasized by other detailed injunctions during the epic. When introduced to his father's nature reserve and invited to hunt there, Davit' first freed all the animals. 'How,' he asked, 'could one shoot a captive?'²⁴ In the Georgian epic also, the hero Tariel did not slay his captured enemies.²⁵ We can compare this attitude to the action of Smbat Mamikonyan, in *The History of Tarôn*, who did not allow the defeated Persians to be slain, 'because they were fleeing.'²⁶ The Byzantine epic *Digenes Akrites*, however, expresses a more realistic view, discovered no doubt at great cost, that:

Whoever spares his foes in time of war
Is often ruthlessly struck down by them.²⁷

The principle that booty should not be taken²⁸ can be traced back to the fourth century when Christianity became the state religion of the Armenian commonwealth. P'austos Bouzand's *History of the Armenians* ascribed it to Bishop Grigoris, grandson of St. Grigor the Enlightener.²⁹ Grigoris had preached to Sanesan, an Arsacid king of the Masqout's,³⁰ who had at first accepted the new faith, but then on examining it had learned that 'taking booty, rapine, killing, greed, the deprivation of others, was hateful to God.' This had angered him, and he asked, 'How then shall we live?' Thereupon the Masqout's, concluding that the attempt to convert them was a subterfuge of the king of the Armenians to prevent them from plundering his country, killed Grigoris. Bouzand's *History*, on the other hand, does not disapprove of collecting the booty of battle, as distinct from the deliberate plundering of the populace.³¹

A fundamental rule observed by the giants of Sasoun was that the enemy could not be attacked while he was at a disadvantage. He had to be given due notice, and deceit was forbidden, for such conduct did not befit brave men. A glowing example is again afforded by Davit' when he resolved to alert the enemy force, led by Msra Meliq, before mounting his attack. Unlike the Hittite king Murshilis II, who boasted that he had 'invaded the country of Piggainarresa while it was sleeping,'³² Davit' deliberately awakened the foe:

Whoever is asleep, let him awake,
Whoever is awake, saddle your horses,
Whoever has saddled his horse, arm yourselves,
Whoever is armed, mount your horses.
Say not, Davit' came like a thief,
Went like a thief!³³

He followed the same procedure even when the most powerful kings of the world were ranged against him.³⁴

This attitude may be connected with a well-known ancient practice in which the hero challenged his adversary to come out and fight.³⁵ The Babylonian *Chronicle P* records that Hurbatila, a king of Elam in the fourteenth century B.C., wrote to his Babylonian counterpart to make an appointment: 'Come, let us do [battle] together, I and you, at Dur-Shulgi.'³⁶ Other examples, some historical and others legendary, include the Persian rebel Ardashir's challenge to the last Arsacid king³⁷ (third century), the northern king's coarse threat to King Trdat³⁸ (fourth century), and the French *défi* to Henry V in 1415, leading to the battle of Agincourt.³⁹

A more developed situation is found in the late tenth century English poem *The Battle of Maldon*, in which the Danes asked for permission to advance, and the English leader Byrhtnoth allowed them to do so. Speaking with hindsight, the poet was critical of the decision for its excessive magnanimity, which led to Byrhtnoth's defeat:

It was then the eorl disdainfully granted
Too much ground to the hostile host.
Across cold water Byrthelm's son
Shouted reply, and the shipmen hearkened:
'Now way is made open, come quickly to us,
Warriors to the onset. God only knows
Who shall hold sway on the field of slaughter.'⁴⁰

The Armenian popular epic differs from these in its unique stipulation that the enemy had to be armed and ready before he could be attacked; it also goes much further than the Biblical injunction, 'cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly,'⁴¹ which does not apply to enemies. This exceptional belief—that one's opponent should not be at a disadvantage—was known as early as the first century. It impressed Dio Cassius, who related that Trdat I, while in Rome, was one day viewing the exhibition of the pancratium at which one of the contestants, after falling to the ground, was being struck by his opponent. When the king of the Armenians saw this, he exclaimed: 'The fight is unfair. It is not fair that a man who has fallen should be struck.'⁴²

Many centuries later the same view reappears in the Greek *Digenes Akrites*, an epic closely associated with the Armenian marches of the Byzantine empire. The hero is speaking in this excerpt:

Then terror seized on him and fear constrained,
Thinking that I would hit him lying down.
I said to him, 'Kinnamos, why are you trembling?
My use has never been to strike the fallen.
But, if you like, rise up and take your weapons,
And we will face to it, as brave men should.
It is for weaklings to hit carcasses.'⁴³

Independent evidence for this 'chivalry' in combat among the Armenians comes from a Samaritan legend in which the son of the king of Armenia had been killed by Joshua. In consequence the king sent a message to the Jewish leader informing him that he, with his allies, would arrive to do battle thirty days hence.⁴⁴ This legend thus credited the Armenian king with having given ample notice to allow his opponent to be fully prepared.

Even more remarkable confirmation exists in Turkmen tradition. It is important because the Turkmens, unlike the Samaritans, were acquainted with the Armenians from first-hand experience, and not merely by reputation, having lived among them on Armenian soil. This strange philosophy, so unlike their own,⁴⁵ impressed them so much that it was incorporated in their ballad of a famous bandit minstrel Koroghlu, believed to have lived in the latter half of the seventeenth century. On one occasion, Koroghlu had demanded his usual transit tax from a Turkish merchant passing through his area of control. When, in anger, Koroghlu attacked the traveller without warning, the latter upbraided him: 'Thou should'st throw a woman's veil over thy face, it is not fit for a man to act thus . . . A brave man gives timely warning to his enemy; it is a woman's part to fight without warning, and to kill by stealth. Give me at least time to finish my backgammon party.' The intrusion of this foreign ethic is at first unexplained. Only much later in the narrative, when the merchant has been treacherously killed by the bandit, do we learn the truth, since it is then revealed that the murdered man was in fact Armenian.⁴⁶

Thus we see that the advocacy of fair play in combat continued to be propounded in Armenia until modern times. But if this policy of fighting a clean fight under any conditions was adhered to by Armenians in the situations of real life, it must surely have been disastrous for them, for it was shared neither by their eastern nor by their western neighbours, even in folklore. For the Romans, it was a maxim that 'opportunity in war is often more to be depended on than courage.'⁴⁷ Indeed, Oman made a special point of noting the lack of chivalrous behaviour among both the

Romans and the Byzantines.⁴⁸ Did the Armenians then really go to war handicapped in this way?

Detailed documentary evidence on Armenian military tactics is unfortunately lacking, since the subject does not seem to have excited the interest of Armenian writers. In P'austos Bouzand's royal *History* there is never any hint of subterfuge, except in one instance when King Arshak did attack the invading Persians at night. In a much later epoch, the historian Kirakos Gandzaketsi reported that the first Armenian king of Cilicia (in the late twelfth century) was able to establish the independence of the Armenian state in exile by launching a series of surprise attacks.⁴⁹

There is, however, one important battle regarding which we have considerable detail on the behaviour of the Armenian army. This was the confrontation at Avarayr in A.D. 451, fought to resist the Persian attempt to force the Armenians to abjure the Christian religion in favour of Zoroastrianism. Ghazar P'arpetsi reports that when the Armenian troops reached the plain where the Persian troops had encamped, they found that the Persians were not ready to do battle, so that 'if they had wished, they would have been able to completely incapacitate the tired horde. But they allowed them to rest that day.' In this crucial battle, therefore, with the invaders already on Armenian soil, the Armenians did not make use of their advantage: 'They allowed them to rest that day.' Ghazar rationalized this semi-suicidal behaviour: 'For those fired by the desire to carry out deeds of bravery no longer dreamed of victory. Having witnessed daily the desolation of those who had lost their souls, they sought continually to reach the time when they would be called to the martyrdom they desired.'⁵⁰ In other words, they were seeking spiritual salvation rather than military victory. Nevertheless, this view does not accord with the actual conduct of the battle by Prince Vardan, and the episode may well reflect standard Armenian practice in battle.

The third noteworthy feature in the popular epic is the way it carefully differentiates the actions of foreign rulers from those of their peoples. Enemy kings are generally represented as perfidious, greedy and deceitful, but these motives are not attributed to the common people led by them. When Davit' decimates Msra Meliq's invading army, an elderly Egyptian comes forward, bare-headed, to plead with him:

'Davit', I would die for your sun,
Are they not also human beings?
Why do you kill them, destroy them?
They too have children,
Homes and wives.
When you kill them,
You become responsible for their babes.
They are only poor and helpless people;
Some, their mothers' only sons,
Others, newly married grooms;
Some, the pillars of their hearths,
Others, the light of their homes.'

But why, asks Davit', had they attacked Sasoun? The old man explains:

'Why do you blame us?
Msra Meliq brought us here by force.
Msra Meliq is your foe,
Go and fight with *him* !'⁵¹

Davit' is touched by this plea. His sympathy towards the common man—even of

invading troops—overcomes him. As a result of this encounter he proceeds to challenge Msra Meliq to single combat. But his challenge is not accepted. The meliq invites him to his tent, ostensibly to eat and drink, which Davit' at first refuses, exclaiming, in one version:

'Why have you brought these wretched people to fight?
And now you expect us to sit and take our ease?'⁵²

This motif of single combat is a common one, as for example in the well-known story of David and Goliath (I *Samuel* 16). Almost always the motive is to save the armies from mutual destruction. One instance is the challenge of the Gothic king to the Greek king in Agat'angeghos's *History*, so that 'without bloodshed and slaughter there would be a settlement between the two sides.'⁵³ Another example is the challenge sent by Cunincpert, king of the Langobards, to Alahis: 'See how many people there are on both sides! What need is there that so great a multitude perish? Let us join, he and I, in single combat, that one of us to whom God may have willed to give the victory have and possess all this people safe and entire.'⁵⁴ The emphasis here is on the maintenance or acquisition of wealth in the form of human beings. In contrast, the concern of Davit' of Sasoun is to save people as individuals, each with his own personal responsibilities. His challenge to Msra Meliq is an expression of his feelings towards the common people who are the inevitable sufferers of war.

This sympathy for common folk also occurs early in the first cycle, when the two founding brothers of Sasoun build dwellings for their subjects before beginning on their own castle.⁵⁵

The particular characteristics of *The Epic of Sasoun* are best understood in the light of the cultural and political history of the Armenian people. The incessant nomad invasions of the Armenian plateau, beginning with the Arabs in the seventh century, followed by Seljuks, Mongols, Qaraqyunlu and Aqqyunlu Turkmens, Persians, and, in the sixteenth century, Ottoman Turks, had destroyed (among other things) almost all the unwritten ancient Armenian epics and legends. Their place was taken by *The Epic of Sasoun*, produced by the common people. Earlier epics, such as that about Prince Aram, had been created for the nobility and, as far as we know, contained no specific concern for the peasantry, nor any severe strictures on the conduct of war. *Sasna Dsr'er* was transmitted orally in the villages, and remained unadulterated by the influence of the nobility or the church. It forms a unique jewel in world folk literature, expressing ideas and concepts unknown elsewhere.

It is true that in some ways there is a superficial similarity between the Sasounian attitude to battle and that of medieval European chivalry, for instance in the injunction that captives should not be slain.⁵⁶ In fact, however, the European chivalric code applied to only one class, and in practice only to Christendom. The Sasountsis, in contrast, extended their mercy to all classes and peoples, whether Christian or pagan. If we compare Davit' with another Christian hero fighting paganism, the British Arthur as portrayed by Geoffrey of Monmouth, there is a slight similarity, but in essentials the two kings are antithetical. Arthur, like Davit', is the protector of his own people, but he attacks the Saxons in order to plunder them, he strikes at the enemy without warning, his troops act cruelly towards the peoples he has conquered, he kills captives, and he is an imperialist. When he fights in single combat, it is only in reply to a challenge from a Roman general.⁵⁷ In contrast, Davit' embodies the childlike belief that right will always prevail over might and force should be used only in self-defence.

This concept of war may explain why the *miabanout' iun Hayots* (the Commonwealth

of the Armenians) never developed into an empire. In time of war, the Armenians could muster substantial forces, their cavalry varying from 15,000 to 120,000 men,⁵⁸ yet at no time from the era of the Khurrians in the second millenium B.C. to the beginning of the nomad invasions at the inception of the second millenium A.D. did the inhabitants of Armenia cross their frontiers for the purpose of territorial aggrandisement. It is around this fact that *The Epic of Sasoun* has been constructed.

NOTES

1. Movsēs Khorenatsi, *History of the Armenians*, Bk. I, ch. 30; Bk. II, chs. 49 and 61.
2. Manouk Abeghyan (ed.), *Sasna dsr'er* (Hay-pet-hrat, Yerevan, 1936, 1944, 1951).
3. The collated text: *Sasountsi Davit'* (Hay-pet-hrat, Yerevan, 2nd ed., 1961).
4. The epic's ideas are presented in crystallized form in a version by Nairi Zaryan: *Sasna Davit'* (Hayastan, Yerevan, 1966).
5. G. G. Srvandztyants, *Grots ou Brots yev Sasountsi Davit'* (Constantinople, 1874).
6. Manouk Abeghyan, *Hay vipakan banahiusout'iun* ['Armenian Epic Poetry'], in *Yerker* ['Works'] (Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, 1966), I pp. 354-80; F. Feydit, 'Essai de Chronologie de la Composition des divers Chants de l'Épopée populaire arménienne "David de Sassoun"', *Abr-Nahrain* 13 (1972), 42-51.
7. *Sasna dsr'er*, II (2), illustration.
8. Leon Surmelian, *Daredevils of Sassoun* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1966); Aram Tolegian, *David of Sassoun* (Bookman Associates, New York, 1961); Frédéric Feydit, *David de Sassoun* (Gallimard, Paris, 1964).
9. Artin K. Shalian, *David of Sassoun* (Ohio University Press, Athens, 1964).
10. H. Orbéli, introduction to the collated text (as in note 3), p. iii.
11. E. V. Gulbekian, 'The Significance of the Narrative Describing the Traditional Origin of the Armenians,' *Le Muséon* 86 (1973), 365-75.
12. Khorenatsi, I, 12-14.
13. Cf. G. Grigoryan, *Hay zhoghovrdakan herosakan épos* (Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, 1960), p. 105 ff.
14. C. M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (Macmillan, London, 1952), p. 478.
15. Manouk Abeghyan, *Yerker* (Yerevan, 1968), III p. 197 ff.
16. M. Emin, *Vépq hnouyn Hayastani* (Moscow, 1850); E. Dulaurier, *J. Asiat.* 19 (1852), 5-58.
17. Cf. Grigoryan, p. 186 ff.
18. *Justin*, transl. by J. S. Watson (Bohn, London, 1853), Bk. I, 1.
19. *Sasountsi Davit'*, pp. 247-48 (cycle 3, part 1, ch. 5, vs. 18-19).
20. *Sasna dsr'er*, II (1), p. 393.
21. *Sasna dsr'er*, II (1), pp. 186, 223, 394; II (2), pp. 142, 343, 377.
22. Khorenatsi, II, 50.
23. Surmelian, p. 210.
24. *Sasountsi Davit'*, p. 189 (cycle 3, part 1, ch. 3, vs. 4); *Sasna dsr'er*, I, p. 343; II (1), pp. 71, 377; II (2), p. 452; Surmelian, p. 127.
25. Shot'ha Rust'hveli, *The Knight in the Tiger's Skin*, transl. by M. S. Wardrop (Moscow, 1938), p. 81, vs. 436.
26. *Hovhannou Mamikonyani yepiskoposi patmout'iun Tarôno* (Venice, 1889), p. 38.
27. John Mavrogordato, *Digenes Akrites* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1956), p. 115 (Bk. IV, 1, 1740).
28. Cf. Orbéli, pp. xlii-xliii.
29. P'austos' Bouzand, *History of the Armenians*, III, 6. Khorenatsi's account (III, 3) is somewhat different.
30. Perhaps the ancient Massagetai. Cf. Georgian *Meskheti* and Arabic *Masqat*; see V. Minorsky, *A History of Sharvan and Darband* (Heffer, Cambridge, 1958), pp. 77-8.

31. P'austos Bouzand, IV, 22. Cf. *Chronique de Matthieu d'Edesse*, trad. E. Dulaurier (Durand, Paris, 1858), p. 30.
32. John Garstang and O. R. Gurney, *The Geography of the Hittite Empire* (British Institute of Archaeology in Ankara, London, 1959), p. 29.
33. *Sasountsi Davit'*, pp. 234-36 (cycle 3, part 1, ch. 5, vs. 13); *Sasna dsr'er*, I, pp. 24, 86, 198, 278, 356, 675, 1008, 1115; II (1), pp. 302, 389; II (2), pp. 275, 469, 593, 685; Surmelian, p. 169.
34. *Sasountsi Davit'*, pp. 272-75 (cycle 3, part 2, ch. 1, vs. 9-10); *Sasna dsr'er*, I, p. 1074; see Surmelian, pp. 208-10 for a different version.
35. E.g. 'the king of the Geats roared a furious challenge to the dragon,' *Beowulf*, transl. by David Wright (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1957), ch. 35.
36. A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (J. J. Augustin, Locust Valley, N.Y., 1975), pp. 174-75.
37. *Cambridge Ancient History* (3rd ed., 1975), II (2), p. 32.
38. Zenob Glak, *Patmout'iun Tarôno* (Venice, 1889), p. 46; V. Langlois, *Collection des Historiens anciens et modernes de l'Arménie* (Paris, 1880), I, p. 354.
39. F. Lot, *L'Art militaire et les Armées au Moyen Age en Europe et dans le Proche Orient* (Payot, Paris, 1946), II, p. 9; cf. Charles Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages*, revised by J. H. Beeler (Ithaca, 1973), pp. 62-3.
40. J. B. Trapp, 'Medieval English Literature,' in *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1973), I, pp. 104-14; cf. W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance* (2nd ed., Macmillan, London, 1908), p. 54.
41. Deuteronomy, xxvii, 24. The Armenian version reads: 'Cursed be he that strikes his comrade deceitfully.'
42. *Dio's Roman History*, epitome of Bk. 62, transl. E. Cary (Heinemann, London, 1961), VIII, p. 147.
43. *Digenes Akrites*, Bk. VI, 1, 263, p. 179.
44. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1913), 4, 13.
45. W. Eberhard, *Minstrel Tales from Southeastern Turkey* (University of California Press, 1955), p. 49. Cf. *The Book of Dede Korkut*, transl. by G. Lewis (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1974), pp. 62, 91.
46. A. Chodzko, *Specimens of the Popular Poetry of Persia* (Oriental Translation Fund, London, 1842), p. 184.
47. *Military Institutions of Vegetius*, transl. by Lieut. John Clarke (London, 1767), Bk. III, 26, p. 160.
48. Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* (Methuen, London, 2nd ed. 1924), I pp. 201-2, II p. 253.
49. Kirakos Gandzaketsi, *Patmout'iun Hayots*, ed. K. A. Meliq-Ohandjanyan (Academy of Sciences, Yerevan, 1961), pp. 155, 160.
50. Ghazar P'arpeti, *Patmout'iun Hayots* (Venice, 1933 ed.), II, 38, p. 217; V. Langlois, II, p. 296.
51. *Sasountsi Davit'*, pp. 234-36 (cycle 3, part 1, ch. 5, vs. 13); *Sasna dsr'er*, I, pp. 25, 87, 199, 278, 356, 780, 827, 1008, 1063, 1115, 1118; II (1), pp. 121, 181, 390; Surmelian, p. 169.
52. *Sasountsi Davit'*, p. 238 (cycle 3, part 1, ch. 5, vs. 14).
53. The challenge was taken up by the future king Trdat: Agat'angeghos, *Patmout'iun Hayots* (Venice, 1930), p. 40. A similar incident is related by Procopius, in which the challenge of a Goth is accepted by an Armenian named Artabazes: *Wars*, Bk. 7, IV, 22 ff.
54. Paul the Deacon, *History of the Langobards*, transl. by W. D. Foulke (University of Pennsylvania, 1907), Bk. V, chs. 40-41, pp. 246, 248.
55. *Sasountsi Davit'*, pp. 33-4 (cycle 1, part 1, vs. 13).
56. Christine de Pisan, *The Book of Fayttes of Arms and of Chyualrye*, trans. by William Caxton (Oxford University Press, 1937), 221.
57. *History of the Kings of Britain*, Bk. IX, 1,11; Bk X, 12.
58. Cyril Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Georgetown, 1963), p. 135.